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# FRANCE AND ITALY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

by

VERA MICHELES DEAN

*with the aid of the Research Staff of the Foreign Policy Association*

1 1 1

## INTRODUCTION

SINCE the earliest days of history, the political and economic interests of Europe have converged on the Mediterranean. Here flourished the civilizations of Greece and Rome; here, too, the expanding Roman Empire founded the African colonies of Carthage and Libya, whose glory is recalled by the Fascist government. During the Middle Ages, the Mediterranean was the highroad followed by merchants, travelers and Crusaders bound for the East.

The importance of the Mediterranean was still further heightened by the establishment of national States and their colonial expansion in Africa and Asia. The maintenance of communications through the Straits of Gibraltar and the Suez Canal with India and Australia is one of the basic principles of British imperial and foreign policy. From the point of view of France, the Mediterranean constitutes an indispensable link between the metropolis and French colonies in Africa and Indo-China, especially as regards the transportation of native troops to France in time of war. Italy, almost entirely bounded by the Mediterranean, depends on Mediterranean traffic for its supplies of foodstuffs and coal.<sup>1</sup> The preservation of peace in the Mediterranean is therefore of concern to all three of these States, as well as to Spain. This fact was stressed anew in the French naval memorandum made public on December 26, 1929. After pointing out the importance, for Great Britain, of the maintenance of communications through the Mediterranean, and its equal importance for France, the memorandum

suggests the desirability of the negotiation of an agreement of mutual guarantee and non-aggression by the Mediterranean powers. In reply, the Italian press has emphasized the overwhelming need of Italy for security in this region.

"Mediterranean security is useful for France, but not necessary. . . . Mediterranean security is, however, indispensable to Italy for the life of her forty millions of inhabitants. Here the right is created by nature."<sup>2</sup>

Underlying the demands of both France and Italy for security in the Mediterranean is the controversy over colonial problems, in which the two countries have been engaged since the formation, in 1861, of the United Kingdom of Italy. No sooner had Italy achieved a degree of unity at home than it sought to expand in Africa where, however, it had been preceded by other European States. "We were twice belated: we did not take part in the conquest of Africa when it was barbarous, and we did not participate in the division of Africa when it was already penetrated by civilization."<sup>3</sup> In North Africa Italy found itself confronted by France. Italy coveted Tunis, where a number of Italians had settled since the early part of the nineteenth century. Bismarck and Lord Salisbury, however, had encouraged France at the Congress of Berlin, 1878, to seek compensation for its European losses in Tunis. Acting on this advice, France invaded Tunis in 1881 and established a protectorate. The seizure of Tunis caused dismay in Italy and hastened, if it did not determine, Italy's entrance into the Triple Alliance.

1. Cf. *Note verbale* communicated by the Italian government to His Majesty's Representative at Rome, October 6, 1928 (Great Britain, *Papers Regarding the Limitation of Naval Armaments*, Cmd. 3211, p. 41).

2. Virginio Gayda, *Giornale d'Italia*, January 26, 1930.

3. Roberto Cantalupo, *L'Italia Musulmana* (Rome, Casa Editrice d'Oltremare, 1929), p. 20.



Finding its path blocked in North Africa, Italy turned to East Africa in search of colonial possessions. It subjugated Eritrea in 1882-1889, but was defeated in 1896 in an attempt to obtain control of the Empire of Abyssinia, the natural hinterland of Eritrea. Moreover, Italy found France already entrenched at Djibouti, a desirable port on the Red Sea. In 1905 Italy completed the occupation of Italian Somaliland, which had been begun in 1885. Finally, in 1911, in the course of the Turco-Italian war, Italy annexed Libya. Here, too, it had been preceded by France: a French sphere of influence in the Libyan hinterland had been recognized by the Franco-British declaration of 1899.

The World War offered Italy an opportunity to improve its colonial position. The Treaty of London, 1915, set forth the conditions on which Italy entered the war at the side of the Allies, and made the following provision with regard to colonial questions (Article 13):

"In the event of France and Great Britain increasing their colonial territories in Africa at the expense of Germany, those two Powers agree in principle that Italy may claim some equitable compensation, particularly as regards the settlement in her favour of the questions relative to the frontiers of the Italian colonies of Eritrea, Somaliland and Libya, and the neighbouring colonies belonging to France and Great Britain."<sup>4</sup>

#### ITALY'S COLONIAL DEMANDS AT THE PEACE CONFERENCE

At the Paris Peace Conference Italy demanded the following compensation under Article 13: from France, the rectification of the western frontier of Libya, access to Tibesti and Lake Tchad, and the cession by France of Djibouti and the French railway in Abyssinia; from Great Britain, the cession of the oasis of Jarabub, the valley of the Juba River and the port of Kismayou (Chisimaio).<sup>5</sup> These demands were regarded by France and Great Britain as excessive. Nevertheless, by the Bonin-Pichon agreement of September 12, 1919 France rectified the western frontier of Libya on the line Ghadames-Ghat-Tummo and adjusted two controversial points with regard to the status

of Italians in Tunis.<sup>6</sup> Great Britain, for its part, by an agreement concluded on July 25, 1924, ceded Jubaland and the port of Kismayou to Italy.<sup>7</sup>

The colonial settlement, which both France and Great Britain consider definitive, is viewed in Italy as only partial fulfilment of the provisions of Article 13 as interpreted by Italy at the Paris Peace Conference. Great Britain, it is conceded, has fulfilled her obligations under Article 13, "not magnificently, indeed, but sufficiently;"<sup>8</sup> the cessions made to Italy by France, however, are regarded as in no way commensurate with the sacrifices in men and money which Italy made during the World War, especially when compared with the territory acquired by France in Africa at the expense of Germany.<sup>9</sup>

The striking disproportion between the African empire of France, with an area of 3,773,000 square miles and a population of thirty-five millions, on the one hand, and the arid Italian colonies, with an area of 780,000 square miles and a population of less than two millions, on the other, is the subject of frequent comment in the Italian press. Italy, it is claimed, with its large and vigorous population, is better equipped for the tasks of colonization than France, the numbers of whose population remain stationary, and are threatened by a declining birth-rate.<sup>10</sup> It is only just, therefore, according to Italian colonial writers, that France should comply with its engagements under Article 13, by ceding to Italy the Libyan hinterland, if possible as far as Lake Tchad, and the port of Djibouti.

#### THE FASCIST COLONIAL PROGRAM

Fascist spokesmen and the Fascist press regard Italian colonial expansion as imperative. The ever-growing population of Italy does not find sufficient means of subsistence in the mother country, which is already

6. Under the terms of this agreement France also undertook to supply Italy with phosphates, it being understood that Italy's minimum requirements averaged 600,000 tons of phosphates annually.

7. Great Britain, *Parliamentary Papers, Italy No. 1 (1924)*, Cmd. 2194.

8. Virginio Gayda, "Le Due Questioni: la Tunisi e la Coloniale," *Giornale d'Italia*, August 14, 1928.

9. *Ibid.*; cf. also Cantalupo, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

10. In 1926 the population of Italy numbered 42,000,000 and was increasing at the rate of 10.3 per thousand; the population of France numbered 40,000,000 and was increasing at the rate of 2.6 per thousand.

4. Great Britain, *Parliamentary Papers, Agreement between France, Russia, Great Britain and Italy, signed at London, April 26, 1915*, Cmd. 671.

5. *L'Afrique Française*, Vol. 29 (1919), p. 146-147.



densely populated and poor in natural resources. Emigration which, prior to the World War, had served to relieve economic pressure in Italy, has now been discarded as a satisfactory solution of the problem of over-population. Italian emigrants, it is claimed, are in danger of being absorbed by the countries of immigration in the second or third generation; Italy is thus deprived of the talents and fortunes of some of its most enterprising citizens. Nor should the growth of the population be checked; on the contrary, it must be encouraged, and an outlet for the surplus population must be found in the Italian colonies. Italy therefore must intensively develop the colonies it already owns, and acquire new ones, if it is to succeed in feeding and employing all its citizens within the boundaries of Italian possessions. France, while recognizing the need of Italy for colonial expansion, is determined that this expansion shall not take place at its own expense.

The tension which characterized Franco-Italian relations in 1926, when France concluded a defensive alliance with Yugoslavia, has shown signs of relaxation during the last two years. Italy still views with displeasure, and occasionally with alarm, the cordiality of Franco-Yugoslav relations.<sup>11</sup> It has so strengthened its position in the Balkans by a series of treaties of amity and arbitration, however, as to feel a degree of security in that region. The question of Tangier has been settled to the satisfaction

of Italy. The asylum given by France to anti-Fascist émigrés and the occurrence of anti-Fascist incidents on French soil, while frequently criticized by the Italian press, have caused no serious incidents. Friction, however, exists between the two countries as the result of three unsettled issues in Africa: the delimitation of the southern confines of Libya; the status of Italians in Tunis; and the Italian demand for Djibouti.<sup>12</sup>

Negotiations for the adjustment of these controversial points were opened in Rome on March 19, 1928 between the Italian government and M. de Beaumarchais, French Ambassador in Rome. These negotiations, which have not yet been completed, are directed toward the conclusion of two agreements: a political pact of amity, and a series of protocols intended to liquidate specific issues.<sup>13</sup> In February 1928 M. Briand, French Minister of Foreign Affairs, had said in the Senate:

"I hope that very shortly the last small clouds which could exist between us and Italy will be dissipated, and that an accord will be realized which will permit both France and Italy to safeguard their respective interests in an entente as cordial, I shall add even as fraternal, as one could desire."<sup>14</sup>

Similar optimism was expressed by M. Mussolini in the Italian Senate on June 5, 1928, when he said that "the progress of the conversations permits one to hope for their happy conclusion."<sup>15</sup>

## THE SOUTHERN FRONTIER OF LIBYA

The territory known as Libya consists of two administrative districts, Tripoli and Cyrenaica, which were vilayets<sup>16</sup> of the Ottoman Empire until 1911,<sup>17</sup> when they were annexed by Italy in the course of the Turco-Italian war.<sup>18</sup> The Treaty of Lausanne, 1912, which brought the war to a close, pro-

vided for the evacuation of Libya by the Ottoman Empire.

At the time when Italy took possession of Libya, the southern frontier of the territory formed the subject of a dispute between France and the Ottoman Empire. As successor State, and on the basis of the hinterland doctrine, Italy laid claim to the entire

11. Luigi Morandi, "Le Alleanze," *Corriere della Sera*, January 23, 1930.

12. The pros and cons of these three questions are periodically discussed in *L'Afrique Française*, the monthly bulletin of the semi-official *Comité de l'Afrique Française*, and *L'Oltremare*, edited by Roberto Cantalupo, former Italian Under-Secretary for the Colonies. (*L'Oltremare*, which has been published since November 1927, took the place of the *Rivista Coloniale*. The official acts of the *Istituto Coloniale Fascista* are published in *L'Oltremare*.) For works on Italian colonial development, cf. Pablo D'Agostino Orsini, *L'Italia nella Politica Africana* (Bologna, Licinio Cappelli, 1926); Mondaini, *Manuale di Storia e Legislazione Coloniale del Regno d'Italia* (Rome, Attilio Sampaolesi, 1927) 2 vols.; Giuseppe Volpi di Misurata, *La Rinascita della Tripolitania* (Milan, Mondadori, 1926).

13. Benito Mussolini, *Discorsi del 1928* (Milan, "Alpes," 1929), p. 143.

14. *Le Temps*, February 4, 1928.

15. Mussolini, *op. cit.*

16. Provinces.

17. For the earlier history of Tripoli, cf. P. Constanze Bergna, *Tripoli dal 1510 al 1850* (Tripoli, Arti Grafiche, 1925).

18. Italy declared war on Turkey on September 29, 1911; in November of that year it annexed Tripoli and Cyrenaica by royal decree. (Cf. Sir Thomas Barclay, *The Turco-Italian War and its Problems*, London, Constable & Co., 1912.)



region over which the Ottoman Empire had asserted its sovereignty since 1890, regardless of the fact that a large portion of it had been gradually occupied by the French after 1900. Italy now demands the cession by France of Tibesti, Borcu and Ennedi, and possibly Lake Tchad, as territorial compensation under Article 13 of the Treaty of London.<sup>19</sup> France considers that it has already fulfilled its pledge under Article 13 by the frontier rectification provided for in the Bonin-Pichon agreement, and refuses to cede an inch of ground in territory which, it argues, had never been effectively occupied by the Turks. A brief review of the circumstances under which the controversy originated is necessary to an understanding of the position taken by both France and Italy.

During the early period of African colonization, the European States had shown little interest in the development of the interior, least of all the desert region known as the "Oriental Sahara." France alone, convinced that Lake Tchad was the keystone of its African empire, encouraged exploration of the Tripolitan hinterland. The Turkish government, aware of France's aspirations, addressed notes to both France and Great Britain on October 30, 1890, in which it attempted to fix the limits of Libya to the south. On the basis of the hinterland doctrine, the Sublime Porte asserted a claim to the territories of Tibesti, Borcu and Bornu, and declared that the settlement of Barrowa, on Lake Tchad, was to remain within the sphere of Turkish influence.

#### THE FRANCO-BRITISH DECLARATION, 1899

France did not, at the time, deny the claims of the Ottoman Empire. On March 21, 1899, however, France and Great Britain signed a declaration indicating their respective spheres of influence in Central Africa, the third paragraph of which reads as follows:

"It is understood, in principle, that to the north of the 15th parallel the French zone shall be limited to northeast and east by a line which shall start from the point of intersection of the Tropic of Cancer with the 16th parallel of longitude east of Greenwich (13° 40' east of Paris), shall run thence to the southeast until it meets the 24th parallel of longitude east of Greenwich (21° 40' east of Paris), and shall then follow the

24th parallel until it meets to the north of the 15th parallel of latitude, the frontier of Darfur as it shall eventually be fixed."<sup>20</sup>

On the accompanying map the line was drawn so as to include Tibesti, Borcu and Ennedi within the French sphere of influence. From the Italian point of view, the declaration constituted "an obvious and arbitrary" violation of the rights asserted in this region by the Ottoman Empire.<sup>21</sup> The Sublime Porte protested against the declaration, and was seconded by the Italian government.

The question of Libya's southern frontier remained largely academic until April 21, 1900, when French troops arrived on the shores of Lake Tchad. The Turkish government, alarmed by the advance of the French, then took steps to establish effective control over the undelimited region. During the period 1902-1910 Turkish forces succeeded in keeping the French south of the line Bardai—Ain Galakka. On the eve of the Turco-Italian war the two governments named a commission to delimit the southern frontier. The outbreak of the war, however, prevented the fulfilment of this plan.

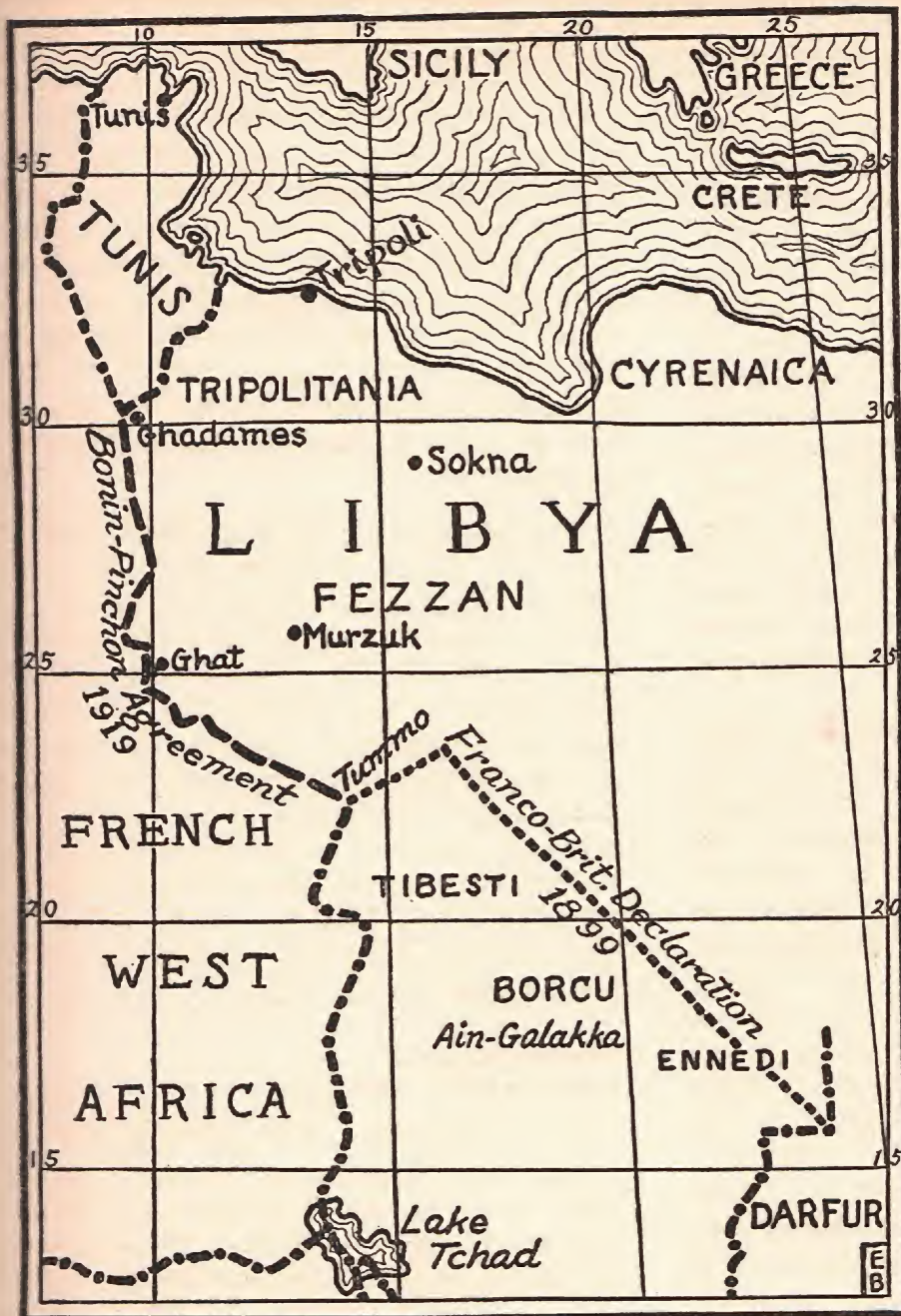
#### FRANCO-ITALIAN AGREEMENTS, 1900-1902

In the meantime, Italy, having failed to obtain Tunis, had centred its colonial aspirations on Libya, where it desired to have a free hand in the eventuality of the surrender of this region by the Ottoman Empire. With this aim in view, Italy entered into negotiations with France in 1900, and again in 1902, with the result that two sets of secret notes were exchanged on the subject. In a note dated December 14, 1900 M. Barrère, French Ambassador in Rome, advised Marquis Visconti-Venosta, Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs, that the Franco-British declaration of March 21, 1899 marked the extreme limit of the French zone of influence—a limit which France had no intention of exceeding. In reply, Marquis Visconti-Venosta took cognizance of this statement. He declared, moreover, that action by the

20. France, Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, *Documents Diplomatiques, Déclaration Additionnelle du 21 mars, 1899 à la Convention Anglaise du 14 juin, 1898* (Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, 1899).

21. Cesare Salvati, *Italia e Francia nel Sahara Orientale* (Milan, Libreria d'Italia, 1929), p. 49. For a French interpretation, cf. Edgard Rouaré de Card, *La Politique de la France à l'égard de la Tripolitaine* (Paris, Pedone, 1926).





LIBYA AND ITS HINTERLAND

French in Morocco was not of a nature to affect the interests of Italy as a Mediterranean power.

"It is understood," he added, "that if a modification of the political or territorial status of Morocco should result from such action, Italy would reserve, as a measure of reciprocity, the right eventually to develop her influence with respect to Tripolitania-Cyrenaica."<sup>22</sup>

22. France, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, *Documents Diplomatiques, Les Accords Franco-Italiens de 1900-1902* (Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, 1920). In 1887 Italy concluded agreements with Austria-Hungary, Germany, Great Britain and Spain, guaranteeing the maintenance of the *status quo* in the Mediterranean, with special reference to Tripoli and Cyrenaica. (A. F. Pribram, *The Secret Treaties of Austria-Hungary 1879-1914*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1920, 2 vols., Vol. I, pp. 95, 110, 117.) The Italo-German treaty provided that, should France attempt to occupy Tripoli, the ensuing state of war between Italy and France would constitute the *casus foederis* foreseen by the Triple Alliance.

On November 1, 1902 M. Prinetti, Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs, addressed a note to M. Barrère, in which he said that "it seemed opportune" to define more precisely the engagements resulting from the notes of 1900, "in the sense that each of the two Powers will be able freely to develop its sphere of influence" in Tripolitania - Cyrenaica and Morocco respectively, "at the moment which it will judge opportune, the action of one of them not being necessarily subordinated to that of the other." In 1900, he added, it had been explained that the limit of French expansion in North Africa "is the frontier of Tripolitania indicated by the map annexed to the declaration of March 21, 1899."<sup>23</sup> This statement has been condemned in Italy as a "grave political error"; the Italian government, it is argued, thus voluntarily renounced all claim it might eventually have asserted to the Tripolitan hinterland.

"By accepting the limits assigned by France to the vilayet of Tripoli and to its hinterland, with the map annexed to the Declaration of 1899, the Italian Minister added his own consent to that previously given by Great Britain with regard to a purely arbitrary delimitation contrary to the traditional Ottoman rights in that region, thus antecedently depriving the future Italian occupation of Tripoli of the two most important . . . sectors of the frontier zones. Moreover, as a result of such recognition by Minister Prinetti, Italy formally renounced all the rights which she would one day have inherited from Turkey—and which the latter, during the entire period of her domination in Tripoli, had always as-

23. *Ibid.* Cf. Edgard Rouard de Card, *Accords Secrets entre la France et l'Italie Concernant le Maroc et la Lybie* (Paris, Pedone, 1921).



serted and effectively exercised—over all the zone situated south of the line Ghat-Tummo, as far as the shores of Lake Tchad.”<sup>24</sup>

Italy, under the terms of the Treaty of Lausanne, 1912, claimed to succeed to the rights of the Ottoman Empire in Libya—rights which had in practice been somewhat curtailed by France, as has already been pointed out. The Turkish troops were withdrawn from Libya. The Italians, however, did not find it possible to follow immediately in their wake, and at the outbreak of the World War Italian occupation did not extend beyond Fezzan.<sup>25</sup> The French, in the meantime, occupied Borcu (1910-1912) and Tibesti (1915-1917), alleging the necessity of policing these regions, which served as a base for incursions into Algeria by desert raiders. Delimitation was under discussion on the eve of the World War. During the war the Italians in Libya were driven back to the coast by the natives, who had rebelled under the leadership of the powerful Senussi tribes. The French consolidated their control of Tibesti and Borcu.

#### THE BONIN-PICHON AGREEMENT, 1919

The Italian colonial program, as formulated immediately before and during the early days of the Paris Peace Conference, demanded a rectification of Libya's western frontier on the line Ghadames-Ghat-Tummo, cession by France of Tibesti, Borcu and Ennedi, and access to Lake Tchad.<sup>26</sup> M. Tittoni, Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs, submitted the first two of these demands to M. Simon, French Minister for the Colonies. M. Simon pointed out that France could not seriously consider the cession of Tibesti and Borcu unless Italy undertook to occupy these regions and to police them efficiently; Italy was not in a position, at that time, to give the necessary guarantees. Moreover, sentiment in Italy became hostile to the proposed cession of Tibesti and Borcu, and a desire

was expressed for compensation in less arid regions of Africa.<sup>27</sup>

It was admitted in French colonial circles that Article 13 of the Treaty of London entitled Italy to some form of compensation in Africa. In fulfilment of its pledge, France offered to rectify the western frontier of Libya so as to permit of direct communication between Ghadames, Ghat and Tummo.<sup>28</sup> Italy accepted the offer, but never regarded it as more than partial compensation. On May 29, 1919 the committee appointed by the Council of Four to examine Italy's claims for territory in Africa, and composed of Lord Milner, M. Simon and M. de Martino, Secretary-General of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, issued a statement which provided, among other things, for the rectification of Libya's western frontier.<sup>29</sup> The terms of the arrangement were set forth in the notes exchanged on September 12, 1919, by M. Bonin, Italian Ambassador in Paris, and M. Pichon, French Minister of Foreign Affairs:

“The oases of El-Barkat and of Fehout are attributed to Italy. The caravan route which connects Ghadames with Rhat [Ghat] by way of Titagsin, Inehoartan, Hassi-el-Misselan, Zouirat and Wadi Amasin, the variant which passes by Tarz-Oulli, Wadi Tarat (Aoussedgin), Inehoartan, or other variant to the west which would be necessary to assure in all weather and seasons a good communication in Italian territory, particularly in the sections of Titagsin to Inehoartan and of Hassi-el-Misselan to Wadi Amasin, are likewise attributed to Italy. The tracing of the new frontier between Tripolitania and Algeria west of this route of communication will be established by means of verification on the spot. From Rhat [Ghat] to Tummo the frontier will be determined according to the ridge of mountains which extends between these two localities, attributing, however, to Italy the direct lines of communication between these localities. The Italian government undertakes to occupy the posts of Rhat [Ghat] and Ghadames as soon as possible.”<sup>30</sup>

The Bonin-Pichon agreement, according to the French, not only fulfils France's pledge under Article 13 of the Treaty of London,<sup>31</sup>

24. Salvati, *op. cit.*, p. 65-66.

25. For the Fezzan campaign, 1912-1914, cf. Corrado Zoli, *Nel Fezzan* (Milan, Alfieri e Lacroix, 1926).

26. Cf. Giuseppe Piazza, *La Nostra Pace Coloniale* (Rome, "Ausonia," 1917), p. 47; Istituto Coloniale Italiano, *Atti del Convegno Nazionale Coloniale per il Dopo Guerra delle Colonie, 1919* (Rome, Unione Editrice, 1920); H. Nelson Gay, *Strenuous Italy* (New York, Houghton Mifflin, 1927).

27. Tommaso Tittoni, "Il Confine Meridionale della Libia," *Questioni del Giorno* (Milan, Fratelli Treves, 1928), p. 111.

28. *L'Afrique Française*, Vol. 29 (1919), p. 146-47.

29. Camille Fidel, "Le Problème Colonial Italien et l'Alliance Italo-Française," *L'Afrique Française*, Vol. 29 (1919), p. 42-43.

30. *L'Afrique Française*, Vol. 30 (1920), p. 88.

31. *L'Afrique Française*, Vol. 33 (1923), p. 96-97.



but also "completely and definitively" determines the African situation of Italy as far as France is concerned.<sup>32</sup> This view is in no wise shared by the Italians. On September 27, 1919 M. Tittoni, in the Italian Chamber of Deputies, referred to the Bonin-Pichon agreement as a "partial and limited application" of Article 13. He added:

"The question of Tibesti and Borcu, or other compensation in lieu of these regions, remains open and will form the object of future negotiations. . . ."<sup>33</sup>

"While to England," says Tittoni, "we have given a final receipt, to France we have given only a receipt on account, and await payment in full in order to issue a final receipt."<sup>34</sup>

A similar opinion was expressed by M. Mussolini in 1923, when he stated in the Chamber of Deputies that the rectification effected by the Bonin-Pichon agreement "did not constitute the definitive solution of the question resulting from the application of Article 13 of the Treaty of London, and that the rights to real and proper colonial compensations attributed to Italy by that article remain unaltered and may form the object of future examination by the French and Italian governments."<sup>35</sup> The Italians find support for their view in the preamble of the Bonin-Pichon notes, in which "other points" are reserved "for future examination."

#### THE FRANCO-ITALIAN CONTROVERSY

French colonial writers are of opinion that future examination of the questions of Tibesti and Borcu is precluded once and for all by the Prinetti-Barrère accord of 1902 in which, it is asserted, Italy renounced all claim to the Tripolitan hinterland south of Tummo. The Italians, however, argue that in 1902 they recognized, not a settled frontier, but merely the confines of a zone of influence, and that, moreover, the question of Libya's southern frontier has been placed in an entirely new light by Article 13 of the Treaty of London.<sup>36</sup>

Nor is the controversy purely academic. Since 1922 the Italian troops have successfully advanced into the interior of Libya, recapturing the positions lost during the World War. In 1924 the Italians occupied Ghadames. On January 25, 1930 the Italian flag was hoisted at Murzuk, the capital of Fezzan. The oasis of Ghat was occupied on February 24. The disputed southern frontier of Libya is the goal of the Italian troops. Once there, Italy expects to press its demand for a settlement of the controversy.

"... Last, but not least, among the consequences [of the occupation of Murzuk] is the possibility it offers of placing resolutely before France the question of the southern confines of Libya: a question which until now our good cousins have considered premature, given our alleged incapacity to occupy securely even the uncontested zones of the interior."<sup>37</sup>

As a maximum, Italy demands Lake Tchad.<sup>38</sup> In view of the fact, however, that the commercial importance of Lake Tchad has waned considerably owing to the development of trade routes along the west and east coasts of Africa, Italy would be satisfied with Tibesti and Borcu as a minimum.<sup>39</sup> These territories have no intrinsic value, being little more than a desert. They are, however, traversed by caravan routes which join the interior to the Mediterranean, and present considerable interest for Italy from the point of view of strategy and administration. The Italian troops, it is claimed, can hold Fezzan only if they find a base in the oases of Tibesti and Borcu; and they can hold the coast only as long as they remain in control of Fezzan. Moreover, uncertainty as to the delimitation of the frontier encourages unrest among the natives, and indefinitely postpones the colonization of Tripoli.<sup>40</sup>

In answer to these arguments, the French contend that they cannot withdraw from Tibesti and Borcu for fear this region may once more become a retreat for desert raiders.<sup>41</sup> The cession of Lake Tchad

37. *Corriere della Sera*, January 26, 1930.

38. Virginio Gayda, "I Compensi Coloniali," *Giornale d'Italia*, September 18, 1928.

39. Salvati, *op. cit.*, p. 106. The construction of the proposed Trans-Saharan Railway by France is expected to decrease still further the commercial importance of Lake Tchad. (*Corriere della Sera*, January 18, 1930.)

40. Cantalupo, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

41. Auguste Terrier, "Les Aspirations Italiennes vers le Lac Tchad," *L'Afrique Française*, Vol. 37 (1927), p. 128.

32. René Thierry, "L'Afrique de Demain," *L'Afrique Française*, Vol. 30 (1920), p. 87.

33. Tittoni, *op. cit.*, p. 113-114; cf. also *Rivista Coloniale*, February 1920, p. 83.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 114.

35. Cantalupo, *op. cit.*, p. 135-136; cf. also Corrado Masi, *L'Unione* (Tunis), May 29, 1928.

36. Cantalupo, *op. cit.*, p. 135.



would, it is feared, endanger the unity of France's African Empire. Moreover, according to the French, Italy would find the region of little value.

"... Tibesti, Borcu, Ennedi and Endiqui interested the Turks only as centres of slave trade, and are valuable to France only as a 'march' protecting Western Africa and Equatorial Africa . . . against bandits and robbers—but of what use could they be to Italy, which would pour millions into them without the slightest profit?"<sup>42</sup>

Above all, France is reluctant to part with any territory, and claims that a cession would merely whet, but never satisfy, the colonial appetite of Italy.

"We are absolutely opposed here to any cession of territory. In fact, we know from experience that it would have no other result than to increase the appetite of the Italians and to bring about new exigencies on their part. Let us surrender, therefore, not one foot of *qtaf* nor one inch of sand."<sup>43</sup>

## THE ITALIANS IN TUNIS

In the spring of 1881 the French invaded the territory of Tunis, a kingdom which acknowledged the suzerainty of the Sultan of Turkey, and established a protectorate by means of two agreements—the Treaty of Bardo (or Kasr-Sa'id) May 12, 1881, and the additional convention of Marsa, June 8, 1883. Under the terms of these agreements, the Bey of Tunis is nominally the ruler of the country. The government of the "Regency of Tunis," however, is directly supervised by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The French government is represented by a Resident-General, who acts on behalf of Tunis in its relations with other States and exercises, in addition, a far-reaching influence over its internal affairs. A French colonial writer describes the political situation in Tunis in the following terms:

"... The native administration is not displaced, but it is controlled: reforms are proposed to it or imposed upon it; their execution is supervised, when they are not themselves set in motion [by the French government]. . . . The Bey reigns, but France governs. She governs through her Resident-General who is omnipotent, since all power is concentrated in his hands."<sup>44</sup>

The exact nature of the relationship between protecting and protected States has never been defined in international law. Protectorates, in spite of many features which they have in common, "have individual characteristics resulting from the special conditions under which they were created,

and the stage of their development."<sup>45</sup> The French government has expressed the opinion that a protectorate in no sense implies "disguised annexation," but that it involves "the gradual assimilation of the protected State to the laws and customs of the protecting State."<sup>46</sup> Regret has been voiced that the political situation in 1881 made it necessary for France to resort to the fiction of a protectorate in Tunis—a fiction which has frequently proved a source of embarrassment. The following statement has been made on the subject by a French writer on international law:

"This protectorate is a roundabout and incomplete annexation which had better have been completed at the outset. Many difficulties would thus have been avoided."<sup>47</sup>

The Italian colony in Tunis has always offered a definite obstacle to the French policy of assimilation. Beginning with the early part of the nineteenth century, Italians emigrated to Tunis from Sicily and Sardinia in search of better economic conditions than those they could then find at home. In 1881 Italians in Tunis numbered 11,206, as compared with a French population of 708.<sup>48-49</sup> The establishment of the protectorate gave a great impetus to Italian immigration. The construction of roads and other public works undertaken by the French government produced a demand for cheap labor which

45. Publications of the Permanent Court of International Justice, Advisory Opinion No. 4, *Tunis-Morocco Nationality Decrees*, p. 27.

46. *Ibid.*, *Conclusions Finales du Gouvernement Français*, p. 13-14.

47. Paul Fauchille, *Traité de Droit International*, Vol. I, p. 275.

48-49. Régence de Tunis, Protectorat Français, Direction Générale de l'Agriculture et de la Colonisation, *Statistique Générale de la Tunisie 1927* (Tunis, Barlier & Cie, 1928), p. 7. These figures are approximate. An official census has been taken in Tunis quinquennially only since 1891.

42. *L'Afrique Française*, Vol. 33 (1928), p. 44.

43. "La Frontière Méridionale de la Lybie," *L'Afrique Française*, Vol. 33 (1928), p. 251.

44. Cavé, "Sur les Traces de Rodd Balek: Les Problèmes Tunisiens après 1921," *L'Afrique Française*, Vol. 34 (1924), p. 84.



Italian workmen were ready to supply. The development of land attracted a number of agriculturists from Italy. Italian doctors, lawyers and business men followed in their wake. At the present time the Italians in Tunis number 89,216, as compared with 71,020 Frenchmen.<sup>50</sup> The Italians claim that the development of Tunis would have been impossible without them; the French retort that, in the absence of the colonization which they themselves have carried out, Italians would have found no employment in Tunis. Confronted by an Italian "State within a State," the French government has resorted to all means in its power, short of automatic naturalization, to assimilate the Italian population. The Italians, however, oppose all measures which appear to threaten their normal development, and are determined to retain their nationality, language and traditions; their attitude finds support in the colonial policy of the Fascist government.

#### FRANCO-ITALIAN CONVENTIONS, 1896

The status of Italians in Tunis has been precarious since 1919, when the French government denounced the convention of commerce and navigation and the consular convention concluded with Italy on September 28, 1896.<sup>51</sup> The reason given by France for this denunciation was its desire to terminate all its commercial agreements in order to clear the way for post-war economic reconstruction. The two conventions, however, have been tacitly renewed every three months, and must still be considered as regulating the rights and privileges of Italians in Tunis.<sup>52</sup>

The convention of commerce and navigation guarantees most-favored-nation treatment to Italy; this, however, does not in-

clude the enjoyment of special tariff rates which may be established between France and Tunis. The tariff adopted by France in 1898 permits the importation of a considerable number of French and Algerian goods into Tunis duty free.<sup>53</sup> Italian manufactured goods must pay in Tunis the rates of the French minimum tariff. Italian writers assert that this differential treatment has imposed great hardships on Italian commerce in Tunis.<sup>54</sup>

The consular convention provides that "Italians in Tunis and Tunisians in Italy shall be received and treated, with respect to their persons and goods, on the same basis and in the same manner as nationals and French citizens." Detailed provision is made for the enjoyment of civil rights by Italians in Tunis, among them the right to exercise "all sorts of arts, professions and industries." Persons possessing Italian nationality according to the laws of Italy are to be considered Italian citizens in Tunis (Article 13). Finally, a protocol attached to the convention provides for the maintenance of the *status quo* with regard to the Italian hospital and Italian schools already established in Tunis.<sup>55</sup> Italian critics claim that the French government has frequently violated the spirit of the convention, with the result that the advantages assured to the Italians in 1896 have been gradually curtailed.

#### COMPOSITION OF ITALIAN AND FRENCH POPULATIONS

The problems which result from the continued co-existence of French and Italians in Tunis can be understood only after a brief analysis of the part played by these two elements respectively in the life of the protectorate. At the present time the Italian population in Tunis constitutes an overwhelming majority of the European population other than French. The following table illustrates the comparative growth of the several groups of Europeans during the period 1881-1926:

53. United States, Tariff Commission, *Colonial Tariff Policies* (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1922), p. 191.

54. Cesare Tumedel, *La Questione Tunisina e l'Italia* (Bologna, Zanichelli, 1922), p. 17-18.

55. The list of existing Italian schools in Tunis submitted by Italy to France in 1896 included twenty-one public and two private schools.

50. *Ibid.*

51. These conventions replaced the Italo-Tunisian treaty of 1846, which had been concluded for a period of twenty-eight years.

52. The extradition convention concluded in 1896 has not been denounced. For the text of the conventions of 1896, cf. France, Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, *Traité et Conventions en Vigueur entre la France et les Puissances Étrangères* (J. Basdevant, ed.), Vol. II. The commercial and consular conventions contain identical provisions with regard to their termination. Each convention is to remain in force until October 1, 1905. Should neither of the contracting parties notify the other, twelve months prior to this date, of its intention to terminate the convention, the latter will remain in force until the expiration of one year from the day on which either one of the parties may have denounced it.



POPULATION OF TUNIS, 1881-1926<sup>56</sup>

	1881	1886	1891	1896	1901	1906	1911	1921	1926
French .....	708	3,500	9,973	16,207	24,201	34,610	46,044	54,476	71,020
Italians .....	11,206	16,763	21,016	55,572	71,600	81,156	88,082	84,799	89,216
Maltese .....	7,000	9,000	11,706	10,249	12,056	10,330	11,800	13,520	8,396
Spanish .....	.....	.....	.....	.....	} 3,214	600	587	664	517
Greeks .....	.....	.....	.....	.....		683	696	920	646
Other Europeans .....	.....	.....	.....	.....		1,516	1,767	1,736	3,486
Total .....	18,914	29,263	42,695	82,028	111,071	128,895	148,476	156,115	173,281

The Italians who emigrate to Tunis usually contemplate permanent establishment. They engage, for the most part, in agriculture, commerce, industry and the liberal professions. In contrast with the French agricultural population, which consists largely of wealthy land-owners controlling considerable areas of land, Italian agriculturists are men of moderate means who cultivate their own small farms and vineyards, in addition to working on French estates as tenants or day laborers. Out of a total area of 28,108.80 hectares of vineyards, 15,767.65 hectares were owned by 1,822 Italians in 1926, as compared with 11,076.35 in the possession of 802 Frenchmen.<sup>57</sup> Large numbers of Italians are employed in the zinc, copper, lead, iron and phosphate mines; the iron mines situated in the district of Kef and exploited by French and Belgian companies have 3,909 Italians on their payrolls, as compared with 1,642 Frenchmen.<sup>58</sup> Tunisians and Italians practically control the fisheries, as is shown by the following table:<sup>59</sup>

	Boats	Crew
French .....	84	391
Italian .....	763	3,188
Tunisian .....	2,931	10,630

The Tunisian Railway (*Compagnie Fermière des Chemins de Fer Tunisiens*), the Sfax-Gafsa Railway (operated by the *Compagnie des Phosphates Sfax-Gafsa*) and the Tramway Company employ Italians, Frenchmen and Tunisians in the following proportions:<sup>60</sup>

French .....	3,400
Italians .....	1,485
Tunisians .....	3,290

Italians are likewise active in commerce and the liberal professions. Tunis, the capital of the Regency, is also the principal centre of the Italian bourgeoisie. The European population of Tunis is composed of the following elements:<sup>61</sup>

French .....	27,922
Italians .....	44,076
Maltese .....	4,994
Other Europeans .....	2,144

Of the thirty-seven Italian schools now in existence in the Regency, eighteen are located in the capital.<sup>62</sup> The active Italian newspaper, *L'Unione*, has its headquarters in Tunis, where it shares a building with the *Casa Italiana* and several other Italian organizations. The Italians own and operate a hospital in Tunis, and in addition have established a number of philanthropic societies. Physicians, pharmacists and midwives are supplied by the French and Italian population in the following proportions:<sup>63</sup>

	French	Italian
Physicians .....	108	73
Pharmacists .....	19	38
Midwives .....	23	42

The predominantly transient character of the French population in Tunis offers a marked contrast to the permanence of the Italian colony. Officials and government employees, who constitute the largest social group in the French colony, do not expect to remain permanently in Tunis. French landowners and business men come to Tunis for the most part with the intention of returning to France once their fortune is made. The absence from the ranks of the French colony of a stable group of small farmers and shopkeepers is viewed by Italian publicists as an obstacle to effective

56. *Statistique Générale*, 1927, p. 12.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 242-243.

58. Cavé, *op. cit.*, *L'Afrique Française*, Vol. 37 (1927), p. 244.

59. *Statistique Générale*, 1927, p. 440-441.

60. Francesco Bonura, *Gli Italiani in Tunisia* (Rome, Tiber, 1929), p. 18.

61. *Statistique Générale*, 1927, p. 13.

62. *Annuario delle Scuole Italiane all'Estero*, 1927.

63. Bonura, *op. cit.*, p. 27.



colonization.<sup>64</sup> The following table illustrates the distribution of French and Italians according to occupations and professions:<sup>65</sup>

	French	Italian
Agriculture .....	2,699	4,397
Commerce .....	3,760	3,431
Industry .....	4,846	15,827
Entrepreneurs .....	2,880	1,592
Officials and government employees .....	5,743	61
Police .....	562	.....
Liberal professions .....	1,410	1,018
Artists .....	1,686	752
Unclassified .....	9,999	8,882

#### FRENCH POLICY OF ASSIMILATION

The ultimate aim of the French government is the gradual assimilation of the Italian population by means of naturalization, at a rate which would permit the satisfactory absorption of this alien element by the French population. Failing this, however, the government intends to decrease, or at least neutralize, Italian influence as much as possible, and to strengthen the French colony numerically and economically. French policy in Tunis has been summarized by Cavé in the following terms:

"We desire the creation of a French people in Tunis by the mingling and fusion, in our national crucible, of the elements furnished by the races represented on the spot. To arrive at a numerical equality with the Italians is the first stage of the grandiose undertaking now fortunately already set on foot."<sup>66</sup>

To effect this purpose, the French government has resorted to three distinct methods: legislation favoring the interests of the French, as opposed to those of the foreign population, has been adopted from time to time; French emigration to Tunis has been encouraged; and the government has viewed with favor, when it has not actually assisted, the settlement in Tunis of Europeans other than Italians.

The promulgation by the French government of a decree providing for the automatic

naturalization of Italians in the second or third generation has been advocated as the only effective method of assimilating the Italian population in Tunis. Such legislation is at present precluded by Article 13 of the consular convention of 1896. Should France, however, at any time definitively denounce this convention, the Italians would lose the protection they now enjoy, and would become subject to the naturalization laws in force in Tunis.

On November 8, 1921 two decrees regarding naturalization were promulgated in Tunis. A decree of the Bey of Tunis declared that every individual born in Tunis, one of whose parents had also been born there, was to be considered a Tunisian, "under reservation of the dispositions of conventions or treaties binding the Tunisian government." A decree of the President of the French Republic stated that every individual born in Tunis of parents one of whom, a foreigner within the jurisdiction of the French courts, had himself been born in Tunis, was to be considered a French citizen.<sup>67</sup>

#### BRITISH PROTEST LEADS TO SETTLEMENT

The group most affected by the terms of these two decrees was that of the Maltese, who claimed British citizenship. On January 3, 1922 Lord Hardinge, British Ambassador in Paris, protested against the application of the decrees to British subjects.<sup>68</sup> Failing to adjust the controversy by means of diplomatic correspondence, Lord Hardinge, on February 6, 1922, suggested that it be referred to the Permanent Court of International Justice. The French government declined to adopt this procedure on the ground that the question of nationality could not be considered as "exclusively juridical" in character. The British government then placed the matter before the Council of the League of Nations. The Council, by a resolution adopted on October 4, 1922, requested the Permanent Court of International Justice for an advisory opinion on the following question:

64. Tumedei, *op. cit.*, 159; cf. Arthur Girault, *Principes de Colonisation et de Législation Coloniale* (Paris, Recueil Sirey, 1923), p. 545: "Unfortunately, what is still lacking in Tunis is the small colonist, the French peasant."

65. *Statistique Générale, 1927*, p. 10-11.

66. Cavé, *op. cit.*, *L'Afrique Française*, Vol. 37 (1927), p. 244. Cf. remarks made by M. Morinaud in the French Chamber of Deputies on December 27, 1929 with regard to the necessity of accelerating the "rhythm" of naturalizations in Tunis. *Journal Officiel, Débats Parlementaires No. 122, Chambre des Députés, 2e Session Extraordinaire de 1929, Compte Rendu en Étendu, 72e Séance, 28 Décembre 1929*, p. 4741 et seq.)

67. *Journal Officiel Tunisien*, November 8, 1921. Similar legislation was simultaneously promulgated in Morocco.

68. Cf. Advisory Opinion No. 4, *Tunis-Morocco Nationality Decrees*, cited, p. 18.



"Whether the dispute between France and Great Britain as to the Nationality Decrees issued in Tunis and Morocco (French zone) on November 8th, 1921, and their application to British subjects, is or is not, by international law, solely a matter of domestic jurisdiction (Article 15, Paragraph 8, of the [League] Covenant)."

The Court, in the course of its opinion, examined the question whether, granted that a State is competent to enact legislation respecting nationality "within its national territory, . . . the same competence exists as regards protected territory." The Court found that "the extent of the powers of a protecting State in the territory of the protected State depends, first, upon the Treaties between the protecting State and the protected State establishing the Protectorate, and, secondly, upon the conditions under which the Protectorate has been recognized by third powers as against whom there is an intention to rely on the provisions of these Treaties." The Court came to the conclusion that, in view of existing treaties between France and Great Britain with regard to both Tunis and Morocco, the dispute was not "solely a matter of domestic jurisdiction."

Great Britain and France finally adjusted the question of naturalization in Tunis by means of an agreement concluded on May 24, 1923. This agreement provides for the automatic naturalization of British citizens only in the third generation, and not in the second, as had been provided in the French decree of 1921. Children born in Tunis of parents themselves born there may decline French nationality. In no case will British subjects be forced to accept Tunisian in lieu of French nationality. The provisions of this agreement were embodied in a French law of December 20, 1923, which abrogated and replaced the decree of November 8, 1921.<sup>69</sup> The law of 1923 is applicable to all Europeans in Tunis with the exception of the Italians, who are still protected by Article 13 of the convention of 1896.

As long as the convention of 1896 remains in force, the French government must look to individual naturalization by Italians as a means of reducing the numbers and influence of the Italian colony. It is the

opinion of the French authorities that Italians born in Tunis<sup>70</sup> are eager to become naturalized, but are restrained from doing so by other elements of the Italian population.

"To borrow an adjective from M. Mussolini, the veritably tragic reality of the foreign population in Tunis consists in this—that the majority of its African members instinctively desire fusion with the French, a fusion which alone can safeguard their future in the face of the rising tide of natives, whereas the ethnic groups of which they form a part and which contain many transients resist this measure of salvation and use all their moral force to prevent it."<sup>71</sup>

#### NATURALIZATION OF ITALIANS

During the period 1924-1929 it is estimated that 8,099 Italians became naturalized. Naturalization is sought chiefly by industrial workers and the lower bourgeoisie. Of the 247 heads of families naturalized in 1925, 178 were small shopkeepers or industrial workers, 135 employees of railways and tramways, 99 men employed in commerce or industry, 18 agriculturists, 8 fishermen, 2 miners and 3 professional men.<sup>72</sup> The frequency of naturalizations among the lower classes is attributed by the French to anti-Fascism on the part of industrial workmen;<sup>73</sup> the Italians, however, attribute it to the illiteracy and low economic standards of these men who, it is claimed, hope to improve their condition by means of naturalization.<sup>74</sup> The Italian bourgeoisie remains impervious to naturalization and discourages defections from other groups by social ostracism and economic boycott of naturalized Italians.

Italian colonial writers claim that the French hope to increase and invigorate their own depleted population by means of naturalization—a hope which the Italians dismiss as vain. Not only will it be impossible, according to them, permanently to enlarge the

70. The proportion of Italians born in Tunis as compared with those born in Italy is illustrated by the following table:

	1921	1926
Born in Africa .....	46,064	50,395
Born in Sicily .....	32,682	29,860
Born in Sardinia .....	2,860	3,488
Born in Pantellaria .....	—	2,319

Cavé, *op. cit.*, *L'Afrique Française*, Vol. 37 (1927), p. 196.

71. Cavé, *op. cit.*, *L'Afrique Française*, Vol. 35 (1925), p. 632.

72. Cf. remarks made by M. Morinaud in the Chamber of Deputies, December 27, 1929, *Journal Officiel*, cited; Cavé, *op. cit.*, *L'Afrique Française*, Vol. 36 (1926), p. 229.

73. *Ibid.*

74. Bonura, *op. cit.*; Tumedel, *op. cit.*

69. For the text of this law, cf. *L'Afrique Française*, Vol. 34 (1924), p. 42.



population of France by such artificial means, but the Italians naturalized under these conditions may be expected to remain loyal at heart to Italy, and to constitute a liability rather than an asset for France. Moreover, further attempts at naturalization will encounter iron resistance on the part of the Fascist government: "We desire most firmly that Italians should remain Italians."<sup>75</sup>

According to Italian writers, the determination of Italians to retain their nationality is constantly thwarted by France. The French government, it is claimed, attempts to circumvent the provisions of the convention of 1896 by promulgating legislation so unfavorable to Italians as practically to force them to seek French citizenship for the purpose of enjoying the economic advantages of the French. As specific instances of discriminatory legislation, the Italians cite a decree of 1901, which provides that a lawyer who wishes to be registered in Tunis must present a French degree in jurisprudence; a decree of 1913, which prescribes the use of French pharmacopœia, and makes the opening of new pharmacies in Tunis subject to permission by the French government; finally, a decree of 1919 (abrogated that same year), which imposed an extraordinary tax on the accrued value of real estate at the time of sale, and which, according to Italian critics, was intended to prevent the purchase of land by Italians.

#### ALLEGED DISCRIMINATION

More serious, however, is the discrimination which, it is alleged, is practiced with regard to Italian workmen who, as has been pointed out, appear to be most susceptible to the inducements of naturalization. The Italians claim that the French railway and tramway companies in Tunis discriminate between French and Italian workmen in the matter of wages, food allowances, sickness and accident assistance, and annual vacations. The wage schedules of the tramway company are cited as an example.<sup>76</sup>

#### WAGES (IN FRANCS) FOR EIGHT HOURS OF WORK

	Schedule A French	Schedule B Italians	Schedule C Tunisians
Unmarried .....	17	15.25	14
Married .....	18	16.25	15

<sup>75</sup>. Cantalupo, *op. cit.*, p. 211.

<sup>76</sup>. Bonura, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

French publicists, however, are of the opinion that Italian workmen are still unduly favored by French corporations, and urge the latter to employ only French workmen or, failing this, workmen of other than Italian nationality.<sup>77</sup> A convention concluded by the government of the Regency with the *Compagnie des Chemins de Fer de Tunis* on June 22, 1922 provides that new personnel shall be recruited, as far as possible, among French or Tunisian candidates.<sup>78</sup>

Not only, it is alleged, does the French government discriminate against Italians in all walks of life; it also attempts to remove their children from the influence of Italian culture and traditions by limiting the number of their schools. The French government, under the *status quo* provision of the protocol attached to the convention of 1896, disallowed the opening of new Italian schools, both public and private. In 1911, after prolonged altercation in the press of both countries, the French government permitted the establishment of private schools, a number of which were opened under the auspices of the "Dante Alighieri" society between 1911 and 1916. A French decree of February 20, 1919, however, made the opening of private schools by foreigners subject to special formalities. Nor are existing Italian schools permitted to enlarge their quarters or increase their facilities. As a result, Italian schools in Tunis are not in a position to keep pace with the growth of the Italian population. A total of 8,969 Italian children are now educated in Italian schools, as compared with 9,528 Italian children in French public and private schools.<sup>79</sup> The Italians fear that children brought up in French schools will prove easy prey to the inducements of naturalization, and will be lost to the Italian colony—an eventuality which the French government would view without displeasure. The French authorities, for their part, object even to the existing Italian schools on the ground that they foment a nationalistic spirit among their pupils, inculcate Fascist aims and methods, and serve to estrange Italians from cooperation with the French.

<sup>77</sup>. Cavé, *op. cit.*, *L'Afrique Française*, Vol. 37 (1927), p. 244.

<sup>78</sup>. Bonura, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

<sup>79</sup>. Cf. *Annuario delle Scuole Italiane all'Estero*, 1927; *Statistique Générale*, 1927, p. 144-45.



An attempt at adjustment of two of the issues outstanding between the French and Italians in Tunis was made in the Bonin-Pichon agreement of September 12, 1919. This agreement contains the following provisions: all contracts for the sale of real estate are to be accorded similar fiscal treatment, whatever the nationality of the contracting parties; Italian private schools are to enjoy the same régime as French private schools. In accordance with the first of these provisions, the decree of 1919 with regard to the sale of real estate was abrogated on December 20, 1919. The future of Italian schools, however, remains uncertain. A decree promulgated on January 24, 1922 provides for careful scrutiny by the French government of all applications for the establishment of new schools in Tunis. Study of the French language, which is obligatory in all private schools since 1888, must have a "precisely determined" place in all schedules and programs submitted to the government.<sup>80</sup>

#### FRENCH COLONIZATION OF TUNIS

The French government attempts to substitute French for Italian labor in fields, mines and public works. For this purpose it encourages and assists the emigration of French families to Tunis, especially from the agricultural regions of France. Under the terms of the program adopted in 1919, one hundred French families were to be settled in Tunis by 1929; in 1928 the government expected to surpass this figure. Lots of land are annually set aside for distribution among French settlers in Tunis and Frenchmen newly arriving from the metropolis.<sup>81</sup> French peasants, however, are generally reluctant to emigrate and, when once in Tunis, find it less easy to acclimatize themselves than the Italians. Moreover, France does not dispose of so large a surplus population as Italy and does not always find it possible to export to Tunis workmen who are necessary at home.

In view of these facts, the French government has in recent years seriously considered the possibility of attracting Europeans other than Italians to Tunis, and of gradually re-

placing Italian workmen and agriculturists by Yugoslavs, Spaniards, Russians and even Poles.<sup>82</sup> The easy assimilation of a number of Russians who had been stranded in Biseria after the defeat of General Wrangel encourages the French authorities to believe that other small groups of Europeans could likewise be absorbed and eventually substituted for the more recalcitrant Italians. The following naturalization figures for 1926 are given as an illustration:<sup>83</sup>

	Total Number in Tunis	Number Naturalized	Percentage
Russians .....	850	43	5.0
Maltese .....	8,400	207	2.3
Italians .....	89,000	1,341	1.5

The Italian colony in Tunis regards its present situation as a "calvary," and looks to the Fascist government for sympathy and support in its resistance to French attempts at assimilation. Italian colonial writers describe their compatriots in Tunis as part of "unredeemed Italy," laud their fortitude in enduring the treatment meted out to them by the French, and deplore the precariousness of the protection afforded by the consular convention of 1896, the definitive denunciation of which hangs over the Italian colony "like the sword of Damocles."

#### CONFLICTING FRENCH AND ITALIAN POLICIES

A new agreement regulating the status of Italians in Tunis must, according to the Italians, form a part of any general Franco-Italian settlement. Under no circumstances are the rights of Italians to be bartered for territorial concessions by the French in North Africa. The minimum Italian demands in Tunis may be summarized as follows: (1) Italy should be accorded equality of treatment with France in tariff matters; failing that, Italy's principal exports should be permitted to enter Tunis at rates lower than those of the French minimum tariff; (2) Italians should be permitted to enlarge their public schools in proportion to the development of the colony; (3) Italian agriculturists should be permitted to enjoy to some extent at least the facilities offered by the government to French citizens with re-

80. Tumedei, *op. cit.*, p. 267.

81. In 1927 seventy-seven lots of land were set aside for French settlers in Tunis, and thirty lots for French emigrants (*Bulletin Mensuel de l'Office du Protectorat Français en Tunisie*, January 1928, p. 5).

82. Cavé, *op. cit.*, *L'Afrique Française*, Vol. 37 (1927), p. 240 et seq.

83. *Ibid.*



spect to the acquisition of land; (4) Italians should be permitted to participate in the political life of Tunis.<sup>84</sup>

This program the French regard as nothing short of a demand for a condominium.<sup>85</sup> The French assert that the conclusion of a new agreement with regard to Tunis must be preceded by the following acts on the part of Italy: (1) recognition of Franco-Tunisian co-sovereignty in the protectorate; (2) abrogation, pure and simple, of the conventions of 1896; (3) anticipatory adhesion by Italy to any change whatever that France may

find it necessary to effect in the status of Tunis.<sup>86</sup> The acceptance of these conditions would result in relinquishment by Italy of the special interests which it claims to possess in Tunis, the abandonment of the Italian colony to its fate, and the admission that France may annex Tunis when it sees fit. Such terms are unacceptable to the Fascist government. The nationalist and expansionist policies of both France and Italy constitute at present the most serious obstacle to a settlement of their controversy over the status of Italians in Tunis.

## FRANCE AND ITALY IN ABYSSINIA

France, Italy and Great Britain have been actively interested in the independent Empire of Abyssinia<sup>87</sup> since the latter part of the nineteenth century. Not only does Abyssinia possess desirable natural resources,<sup>88</sup> but, what is more important, it is a landlocked State, the natural hinterland of French, British and Italian Somaliland and Italian Eritrea, whose ports on the Red Sea and Indian Ocean serve as outlets for Abyssinian trade. France, Italy and Great Britain have vied with each other to secure Abyssinian commerce for their respective East African ports. Djibouti (Gibuti), the port and capital of French Somaliland, has until now succeeded in obtaining a major portion of Abyssinian goods.<sup>89</sup> The development of this favorably situated port has been materially aided by the construction of a French railway between Djibouti and Addis-Abeba, the capital of Abyssinia.<sup>90</sup>

### TRIPARTITE TREATY, 1906

The construction of the French railway raised a controversy between France, on the one hand, and Great Britain, which advo-

cated the internationalization of the railway, on the other. Italian support was given to Great Britain. A compromise was effected by the tripartite treaty of December 13, 1906,<sup>91</sup> which provides for the maintenance of the political and territorial *status quo* in Abyssinia. In the event of a disturbance of the *status quo*, France, Italy and Great Britain are to act in concert for the protection of their respective spheres of interest in Abyssinia, which are defined as follows:

(1) France: The hinterland of French Somaliland and the zone necessary for the construction and operation of a railway between Djibouti and Addis-Abeba. (This railway is to remain a French enterprise. Great Britain, Italy and Abyssinia, however, are to be represented on the Board of Directors, and equality of commerce is assured to all States.)

(2) Italy: The hinterland of Eritrea and Italian Somaliland, and communications overland between them west of Addis-Abeba.

(3) Great Britain: The basin of the Nile, more particularly the regulation of the waters of the Nile and its affluents.<sup>92</sup>

84. Tumedel, *op. cit.*, p. 211-14; *idem.*, "Italia, Francia e Tunisia," *Giornale d'Italia*, February 11, 1928.

85. Cavé, *op. cit.*, *L'Afrique Française*, Vol. 37 (1927), p. 244.

86. Cavé, *op. cit.*, *L'Afrique Française*, Vol. 36 (1926), p. 420.

87. The independence of Abyssinia was recognized by Italy in the convention of Addis-Abeba, October 26, 1896.

88. Coal, copper, sulphur and platinum have been found in Abyssinia; the exploitation of deposits of potash salts is being carried on with the aid of Italian capital (*cf. The Statesman's Year-Book*, 1928, p. 629).

89. Djibouti handles 65 per cent of Abyssinian trade, as compared with Eritrea, which handles 25 per cent (*Annuario delle Colonie Italiane*, 1929, p. 499).

90. A concession to build this railway was obtained by a French concern in 1894. The railway was completed in 1917, and is subsidized by the French government.

91. France, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, *Documents Diplomatiques, Affaires d'Ethiopie, 1906* (Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, 1907). For an analysis of this treaty, *cf.* Edgard Rouard de Card, *L'Ethiopie au Point de Vue International* (Paris, Pedone, 1928); Parker T. Moon, *Imperialism and World Politics* (New York, Macmillan, 1926), p. 157 *et seq.*

92. Great Britain had been interested in the construction of a barrage on Lake Tsana in Abyssinia since the beginning of the twentieth century. An Anglo-Abyssinian agreement of May 15, 1902 provides that there shall be no interference with the waters of the Blue Nile and Lake Tsana, except in consultation with the British government and the government of the Sudan, and asserts that the Abyssinian government has no intention of giving any concession with regard to the Blue Nile and Lake Tsana except to the British government and the government of the Sudan and their subjects (Great Britain, *Parliamentary Papers, Abyssinia No. 1, 1927, Cmd. 2792*). The waters of Lake Tsana are of the greatest importance to the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, notably for the irrigation of the cotton plantations of the Gezireh.



At the Paris Peace Conference Italy sought further to improve its position with respect to Abyssinia, and demanded the cession by France of the port of Djibouti, as compensation under Article 13 of the Treaty of London.<sup>93</sup> This demand was refused by the French on the ground that Djibouti is an "indispensable base" of French influence in East Africa.<sup>94</sup> Italy thereupon turned its attention to the establishment of communications between Eritrea and Italian Somaliland, and the development of the Eritrean port of Assab.

#### ANGLO-ITALIAN NOTES, 1925

The Italian government, desirous of securing the cooperation of Great Britain in the execution of these plans, approached the British government in November 1919 with the following offer: Italy was to support Great Britain when the latter sought to obtain from Abyssinia a concession to carry out works of barrage in Lake Tsana and the right to construct and maintain a motor road between Lake Tsana and the Sudan; Great Britain, in return, was to support Italy when the latter sought to obtain from the Abyssinian government a concession to construct and run a railway from the frontier of Eritrea to the frontier of Italian Somaliland; in addition, Italy requested from Great Britain, and reserved to itself the right to request from France, "an exclusive economic influence in the west of Ethiopia and in the whole of the territory to be crossed by the above-mentioned railway."

The British government gave no consideration to the Italian offer at the time. In 1924, however, "in view of the relations of mutual confidence so happily existing" between the two governments, negotiations were opened on the basis of this offer, and notes embodying the terms proposed by the Italian government in 1919 were exchanged in December 1925.<sup>95</sup>

Rumors of an impending agreement between Great Britain and Italy in Abyssinia aroused vigorous protest in France, where it was regarded as an infringement of the

*status quo* guaranteed by the treaty of 1906. Italy was singled out for criticism in the French press.

"It would have been most surprising if, in the explosion of African expansion to which Italy abandons herself at this moment, she did not once more turn her eyes toward Abyssinia. . . . Fortunately, Abyssinia is a Member of the League of Nations: she will know how to defend herself in that organization, and she will be defended there."<sup>96</sup>

The French prediction was realized. On June 9, 1926 the British and Italian Ministers at Addis-Abeba transmitted the text of the Anglo-Italian notes of 1925 to the Abyssinian government. Ras Taffari, Regent of Abyssinia, protested against the action of the two powers in notes addressed to Great Britain and Italy on June 15, 1926.

"The fact that you have come to an agreement," he said, "and the fact that you have thought it necessary to give us a joint notification of that agreement, makes it clear that your intention is to exert pressure, and this, in our own view, at once raises the previous question. . . .

"This question which calls for preliminary examination must therefore be laid before the League of Nations."<sup>97</sup>

#### ABYSSINIA'S APPEAL TO LEAGUE OF NATIONS

On June 19, 1926 Ras Taffari accordingly set forth the incident in a letter addressed to the Secretary-General of the League of Nations.

"We have the honour to bring to the notice of all the States Members of the League of Nations the correspondence which we have received, in order that they may decide whether that correspondence is compatible with the independence of our country, inasmuch as it includes the stipulation that part of our Empire is to be allotted to the economic influence of a given Power. We cannot but realise that economic influence and

96. *L'Afrique Française*, Vol. 36 (1926), p. 189-90. In 1923 Abyssinia applied for admission to the League of Nations. Great Britain opposed the admission of Abyssinia on the ground that it had not as yet shown itself capable of fulfilling the obligations of an independent State, especially with regard to the suppression of the slave trade and traffic in arms and ammunition (League of Nations, *Records of the Fourth Assembly, Meetings of the Committees, Minutes of the Sixth Committee (Political Questions)*, Geneva, 1923). The candidacy of Abyssinia was supported by France, Italy and Portugal. On September 28, 1923 Abyssinia was admitted to membership in the League of Nations, on the express understanding that the Abyssinian government adhered to the obligations arising out of the conventions of Saint-Germain-en-Laye with regard to the slave trade and traffic in arms (League of Nations, *Records of the Fourth Assembly, Plenary Meetings*, Geneva, 1923, p. 124-125). Cf. Pierre-Alpe, "L'Empire d'Ethiopie dans la Société des Nations," *L'Afrique Française*, Vol. 33 (1923), p. 499; Charles Michel-Cote, "L'Admission de l'Ethiopie à la Société des Nations," *Ibid.*, p. 510.

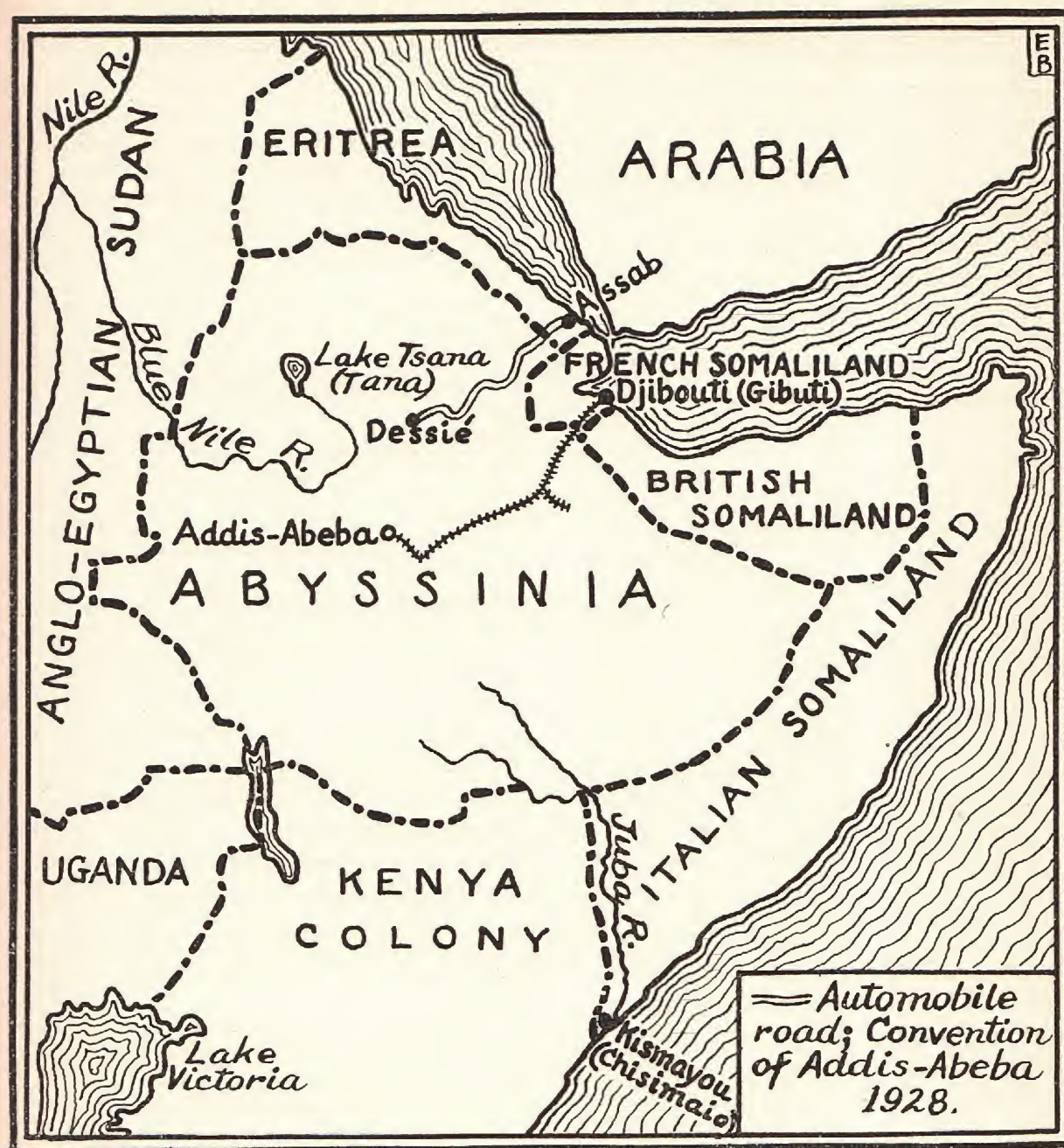
97. Great Britain, *Abyssinia No. 1* (1927), cited; cf. also League of Nations, *Official Journal*, November 1926, where the entire correspondence with regard to this incident was published.

93. Cf. p. 2.

94. Camille Fidel, "Le Problème Colonial Italien et l'Alliance Italo-Française," *L'Afrique Française*, Vol. 29 (1919), p. 42.

95. League of Nations, *Treaty Series*, Vol. L, p. 232 et seq.





### FRENCH AND ITALIAN POSSESSIONS IN EASTERN AFRICA

political influence are very closely bound up together; and it is our duty to protest most strongly against an agreement which, in our view, conflicts with the essential principles of the League of Nations."<sup>98</sup>

The Acting Secretary-General of the League of Nations, in acknowledging receipt of the letter of Ras Tafari, requested instructions as to the procedure he desired the League to adopt in this matter. In the meantime, the Secretariat communicated the letter of Ras Tafari to the governments of

Great Britain and Italy, which hastened to assure the League of Nations, Abyssinia and France that they had no intention of exerting pressure on Abyssinia or of subjecting any part of its territory to economic influence. Recognition by Great Britain of "exclusive Italian economic influence in the west of Abyssinia," it was stated, imposed no obligation on any one except the British government. "This recognition cannot affect the rights of third parties or bind the Government of Abyssinia." The incident was closed by the publication of the entire

<sup>98</sup>. *Ibid.*



correspondence exchanged by Abyssinia, Great Britain, Italy and the League of Nations in the *Official Journal* of the League.<sup>99</sup>

#### ITALO-ABYSSINIAN AGREEMENTS, 1928

Italy, however, did not abandon its efforts to obtain from Abyssinia the concessions necessary for the development of the port of Assab. Ras Taffari,<sup>100</sup> determined to oppose understandings between western States with regard to the economic penetration of Abyssinia, was not averse to the negotiation of agreements with each of those States separately. In this manner, he hoped to play off the interests of France, Italy and Great Britain against each other, with possible advantage to Abyssinia. On August 2, 1928, accordingly, two agreements were concluded by Italy and Abyssinia: a treaty of amity and arbitration, and a convention providing for the construction of an automobile road between Assab and Dessié and the establishment of an Abyssinian free zone in the port of Assab. The portion of the road which is to pass through Abyssinian territory is to be constructed by the Abyssinian government, the remaining portion by the Italian government. An Italo-Abyssinian

company is to be formed for the transportation of goods and passengers over this road. At Assab, Italy grants a free zone to Abyssinia for a period of one hundred and thirty years; if in the future this zone should prove inadequate for the development of Abyssinian interests, the Italian government undertakes to give friendly consideration to a demand by the Abyssinian government for an enlargement of the zone.<sup>101</sup>

The construction of the proposed automobile road is expected by the Italian government to play the same part in the development of Assab as that which the French railway has played in the development of Djibouti. Moreover, the favorable terms extended to Abyssinia in Assab will, it is hoped, serve to divert Abyssinian trade from Djibouti to the Eritrean port.

It is conceded in French colonial circles that the Italo-Abyssinian agreements of 1928 constitute a diplomatic victory of no small importance for Italy, the implications of which for France are not as yet clear. "In Abyssinia Italy sets her course toward the future. In what spirit? In a spirit of competition or a spirit of collaboration? *That is the question!*"<sup>102</sup>

99. On November 4, 1927 it was reported that Abyssinia had granted a concession for the construction of a barrage on Lake Tsana to an American syndicate, the J. G. White Engineering Company. Great Britain protested, and reminded Abyssinia of its obligations under the agreement of 1902. The Abyssinian government agreed that British consent was necessary to the construction of a barrage on Lake Tsana, and denied that a concession had been granted to an American concern (cf. *L'Afrique Française*, Vol. 37, 1927, p. 469; *Times*, London, February 10, 1928). On March 8, 1930, the *Christian Science Monitor* reported that a preliminary agreement had been reached between Abyssinia, the Sudan and the White Engineering Corporation regarding the projected dam on Lake Tsana.

100. Ras Taffari was crowned Negus (King) on October 7, 1928.

101. For the texts of these agreements, cf. Istituto Coloniale Fascista, *Annuario delle Colonie Italiane*, 1929, p. 24 et seq.

102. P. Berne de Chavannes, *L'Afrique Française*, Vol. 28 (1928), p. 458. Italics in text.